

## **23. Being ready**

December 9, 2007

Biblical prophecy study has a great attraction to believers and non-believers alike for a lot of reasons. However, if we are not careful about the true reasons why we study these prophecies, it is no different than reading horoscopes or goofing around with a crystal ball. There is one word for it – “USELESS”.

Then we have to ask ourselves: “Why do we study biblical prophecies?” The purpose of Bible prophecy is not for us to make a rapture calendar, nor to scratch our itching prophecy bones, but to build godly character in us, so that we live holy lives.

Jesus shifted the emphasis from being worried about the present to being watchful about the future. The themes in Luke 12 all go together, because one of the best ways to conquer hypocrisy, covetousness and worry is to look for the Lord’s return.

### **A. THE END TIME PROPHECY – ESCHATOLOGY**

Eschatology which means the end time prophecy has aroused many people’s interest about the current events in the Middle East and Europe. However, the majority of people don’t have a good solid biblical foundation to stand on when it comes to this theology. That is why many of them can be easily swayed from one end to another.

I am going to cover a few areas before we start to study the second half of chapter 12 in the Book of Luke.

#### **1) The difference between rapture and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ**

Rapture is one of the most important future events that all of us should be anxiously waiting for. The word ‘rapture’ means “caught up”. In the Greek, it is ‘harpazo’. We get the word ‘rapture’ from Latin Bible Vulgate ‘rapturo’.

It is going to happen right before the seven years of the Great Tribulation happens. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, Jesus will come down from heaven to take up all the living born-again Christians as well as all the dead born-again Christians’ bodies in whatever condition they are in.

The Second Coming of Jesus Christ is going to happen at the end of the Great Tribulation. This time Jesus will come down from heaven to earth on the white horse to conquer and destroy all the evil and its followers.

I can go into a lot more detail about both events, but this is not the time to talk about them.

#### **2) Four different theologies regarding when the rapture is going to happen**

This particular controversy has been a problem to many. It is very important for all of us to clearly understand why the rapture will happen BEFORE the Great Tribulation. That is why I provided you with “Twelve reasons for Pre-Tribulation” in a two page note format. Please take it home, read it and study it carefully. If you have questions, please come see me later.

- The pre-tribulation rapture position believes believers are caught up before this final seven-year period.

- The mid-tribulation rapture position believes believers are caught up in the midst of this final seven-year period.
- The pre-wrath rapture position believes believers are caught up at some time in the second half of this final seven-year period.
- The post-tribulation rapture position believes believers are caught up at the end of this final seven-year period.

Many confused Post-Tribulation people say that Matthew 24 is about the church going through the Tribulation. They even come up with "The replacement theology" which insists that the church has replaced Israel in the biblical eschatology. Nonsense.

When you read Matthew 24 in context, Jesus was talking about the nation of Israel during the Tribulation time, not the church. Besides, the church is not mentioned on the earth throughout the Tribulation in the Book of Revelation.

### 3) No one knows the day or the hour

*Mark 13:32-33 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.*

I don't know which portion of "No one knows" people don't understand. Some delusional individuals come up with fancy formulas and predict a particular date of the rapture. Many gullible people say, "Wow, I didn't know that," and go down hook, line and sinker. 'No one knows' means 'no one knows'.

### 4) There is not one prophecy needs to be fulfilled before the rapture happens.

Some say, "The temple must be built first before the rapture," or "The entire human race must hear the Gospel first before the rapture." What they are confused about is that it is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ which requires these prophecies to be fulfilled, not the rapture. The rapture can happen any time and any day now.

## B. A PARALLEL LINE BETWEEN ANCIENT JEWISH WEDDING AND JESUS

It is very interesting to see a parallel line between ancient Jewish weddings and Jesus. The Bible symbolizes the church as the bride of Christ.

### 1) The groom goes to the house of the bride to make a formal announcement to marry her.

*Luke 1:31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.*

### 2) The groom leaves her with a promise of an undated return.

*Mark 13:32-33 But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is.*

### But as a dowry, he gives her gifts as a promise of his return.

*John 14:16-17 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.*

### 3) The groom goes back to his father's house and prepares a place for him and his bride.

John 14:2-3 *In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

**4) In the meanwhile, the bride prepares herself to receive her groom, even though she has no idea when that might be.**

*Luke 12:35-36 "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; 36 and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately.*

**5) When the house is finished, the groom sends forth his friends with shouts of the announcement of his coming.**

*1 Thessalonians 4:16a For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.*

**6) As the groom approaches the bride's house, the bride goes out and meets him. They will head back to the groom's home.**

*1 Thessalonians 4:16b-17 And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.*

**7) They will have a wedding ceremony and marriage supper.**

*Revelation 19:7-9 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." 8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. 9 Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!' " And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."*

### **C. BEING READY FOR THE MASTER'S RETURN**

*Luke 12:35-40 "Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; 36 and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. 37 Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. 38 And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. 39 But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. 40 Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."*

In His day, when people "gird" their waist, it means that they were ready to work. Like them, Jesus wants us to be ready-minded for His return with His Word in our hearts day and night. In other words, our anticipation for His return should not have any down time. Always being ready for Him.

V37 shows us that after the faithful servants of God get to heaven, Jesus Himself will serve them. We would be most grateful when we get to heaven for our Savior to tell us, "Well done, good and faithful servants," but He is going to serve us? Wow, that blows my mind away. That is our God. How many so-called gods do you know who love his people and wants to serve them? None except our Jesus.

To “watch” means to be alert, to be ready, not to be caught by surprise. That is the attitude we must have toward the rapture. His coming will be like that of a thief: unannounced and unexpected. We must be ready!

#### **D. FAITHFUL SERVANTS AND WICKED SERVANTS**

*Luke 12:41-48 Then Peter said to Him, “Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?” 42 And the Lord said, “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? 43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. 44 Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. 45 But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, 46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47 And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.*

The trustworthy steward proves himself worthy of more responsibilities in the future. For us that means that, if we are faithful, we will receive the rewards God has reserved for us in heaven.

How many of you have heard a comment from even some Christians who don’t believe the rapture can happen anytime saying, “Jesus said that He would come back two thousand years ago, but He didn’t. It will be a long time before He comes back”? They are like this irresponsible steward who was not expecting the return of his master.

Would Jesus literally cut someone into pieces? The point He is trying to get across is that the punishment will be severe. Unbelievers who have put off preparing their hearts for Jesus, who live as if life were a joke, will have something real to dread when Christ comes again.

Not all unbelievers will bear such severe punishment, though. In v47-48, notice the different fates of those who know but neglect God’s will and those who are ignorant of it.

God’s judgment will be fair. It will be based on what the servants know of God’s will. This is not to suggest that the more ignorant we are, the easier time we will have at the Judgment Seat of Christ. We are told to know God’s will and to grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ.

#### **E. MAKING PEACE WITH THE ONE WHO WILL JUDGE OUR SOULS**

*Luke 12:49-59 “I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! 50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! 51 Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. 52 For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. 53*

*Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."*

*54 Then He also said to the multitudes, "Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, 'A shower is coming'; and so it is. 55 And when you see the south wind blow, you say, 'There will be hot weather'; and there is. 56 Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? 57 "Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? 58 When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. 59 I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite."*

Today the popular thinking is that the earth is sacred, the "mother" of all life. We must care for it so it will last forever, right? Wrong. According to 2 Peter 3:10, this earth won't be there in the future.

*2 Peter 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*

I don't think that the New Age people and the Jehovah's Witness people would like this fact. It would be better for them to come to reality and see the truth.

There won't be any peace on earth as long as human governments are in place. Peace on earth will never happen until people first have peace with God in their hearts.

We must apply the truth of v58-59 to our own lives personally. How tragic that men today can predict the movements of the heavenly bodies, split atoms and even put men in the space. But they are blind to what God is doing in the world. They know how to get to the moon, but they do not know how to get to heaven. Our educated world possesses a great deal of scientific knowledge but not much spiritual wisdom.

If we knew a storm was coming, we would prepare for it. The storm of God's wrath is coming, and the Ultimate Judge is already standing before the door.

## **F. APPLICATIONS**

- 1) His coming will be like that of a thief: unannounced and unexpected. We must be ready!**
- 2) Peace on earth will never happen until people first have peace with God in their hearts.**